

THE IMPACT OF CRUISE SHIP TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMIES

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Cruise tourism has been the fastest growing sector of the tourist industry for the past twenty years. Since 1980, the industry has had an average annual passenger growth rate of 8.1% per annum. Since 1980, nearly 100 million passengers have taken a deep-water cruise (2 + days). Thirty-seven percent of total passengers have been generated in the past five years alone. This growth is expected to continue into the future. Although cruise tourism can increase economic activity, cruise ship destinations are finding that the environmental and cultural impacts can be substantial. These impacts are particularly noticeable in small island destinations. Accounting for the net economic and fiscal impacts as well as the social and environmental impacts of cruise ship tourism is being given increased attention as cruise ship activity continues to take a larger slice of the tourism pie.

This presentation will review the experiences of tourism destinations in North America and the Caribbean region based on studies on the region as a whole including the authors extensive study in Key West, Florida. The presentation will focus on key issues, methodologies used in assessing relative impacts, and key findings of individual studies. Based on those findings, options that tourist destinations can take to capture the economic benefits associated with cruise ship tourism while at the same time protecting the quality of life of host communities will be discussed.